Aug 26, 1999

Dear NPDES Permit Holder:

This letter provides you with notice about the status of Discharge Monitoring Report Quality Assurance (DMRQA) Study 19. On May 17, 1999, I sent you a letter explaining the DMRQA requirement in Study 19, including deadlines for submission of data. Since that time the Agency has had delays in DMRQA implementation. Because of these delays, EPA is postponing the deadlines for data submission. The postponements are different for the chemistry and whole effluent toxicity (WET) portions of Study 19.

Chemistry

As you may be aware, the Agency is privatizing several of the functions that support EPA-sponsored performance evaluation studies of environmental laboratories, including the preparation and distribution of the DMRQA chemistry performance evaluation samples and evaluation of these study results. As part of that privatization effort, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) will *accredit* third party entities to conduct performance evaluation studies.

As part of the DMRQA study, EPA will not accept data unless NIST accredited performance evaluation study providers are used. When EPA initiated Study 19 in May 1999, it was expected that the first providers would be accredited by June 1999. The accreditation process is taking longer than anticipated and no providers have yet been accredited. NIST has recently announced that applicants for accreditation that have met accreditation requirements and achieved accreditation will be posted on its web site (by the close of business Monday, October 25, 1999. Given this scheduling , the Agency is delaying the data submission deadlines for the chemistry portion of this year*s DMRQA Study 19. When the accredited provider list is published, EPA will notify you by mail, and provide new deadlines for data submission.

In determining the new deadlines, we will need to provide ample time for laboratories and permittees to contract with an accredited study provider and complete the required analysis. At the same time, however, assuming that data submission for the next DMRQA study - Study 20 - October 2000 for permittees to report results to EPA, we will need to consider whether the time you will need for completing Study 19 would raise issues as to whether the data submissions under Studies 19 and 20 would be close enough to warrant cancellation of Study 19's chemistry portion. The burden on permittees would be a relevant issue. I solicit your comments and any information you have bearing on these issues. To consider your input, we would need it by September 30, 1999. Please address your comments to John Helm (FAX: (202) 564-0029).

Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET)

In the May 19, 1999, letter, we provided the same data submission deadlines for the WET portion of Study 19 as for the chemistry. The WET portion of the study does not require accredited performance evaluation study providers. EPA itself continues having responsibility for the preparation and distribution of samples, and analysis of results for the WET portion of the Study. Due to unforseen difficulties in sample shipping, EPA is modifying the data submission schedule.

Under the modified schedule, the toxicity support laboratories are now required to submit the results of the toxicity testing to the permittee by October 8, 1999. The Permittee Data Report Forms are now required to be submitted to the EPA no later than November 15, 1999.

Thank you for cooperating in this national program to improve the quality NPDES self-monitoring data. We apologize for the inconveniences and uncertainties you are experiencing during our transition period. Please disregard any information you might have about cancellation of the chemistry portion of DMRQA Study 19, including information in a letter dated August 5, 1999, electronic copies of which went to state and federal employees. When writing that letter, we did not have the NIST schedule and were very concerned about delays in accreditation whether they would necessitate canceling Study 19's chemistry portion. That letter was not mailed to permittees participating in Study 19, who were the addressees, and is supplanted by this letter.

I appreciate your patience as we work to implement the new process.

Sincerely Yours,

Signed and delivered

Elaine G. Stanley, Director
Office of Compliance